

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A computer program product for implementing an electronic commerce system
2 supporting on-line stores accessible by a set of buyers, each buyer having a buyer representation
3 in the electronic commerce system, each buyer representation being associated with one of a set
4 of one or more organizations, the computer program product comprising a computer usable
5 medium having computer readable program code means embodied in said medium, and
6 comprising:

7 computer readable program code means for defining and maintaining a set of customer
8 trading agreement data items, each comprising terms and conditions associated with one of the
9 set of buyer representations and one or more of the on-line stores;

10 computer readable program code means for defining and maintaining a set of base trading
11 agreement data items comprising terms and conditions, each of the base trading agreement data
12 items being available for reference by one or more of the customer trading agreement data items
13 or one or more of others of the set of base trading agreement data items;

14 computer readable program code means for defining and maintaining a set of store
15 settings trading agreement data items, each store settings trading agreement data item being
16 associated with one of the on-line stores;

17 computer readable program code means for defining and maintaining a set of
18 organization-specific trading agreement data items, each organization-specific trading agreement
19 data item being associated with one of the set of organizations; and

20 computer readable program code means for implementing an application interface for
21 returning a set of governing terms and conditions for a buyer-store electronic commerce session,
22 based on the referenced customer, base, store settings and organization-specific trading
23 agreement data items.

1 2. The computer program product of claim 1 in which the application interface for returning
2 a set of governing terms and conditions determines the set of governing conditions for the buyer-

3 store electronic commerce session by taking the union set of the terms and conditions specified
4 in the following trading agreements, where such agreements are defined to comprise:

- 5 a. the customer trading agreement data item for the buyer-store electronic
6 commerce session,
- 7 b. any base trading agreement data items referenced by the customer trading
8 agreement data item and by other referenced base trading agreements,
- 9 c. any store settings trading agreement data items for the store of the buyer-
10 store electronic commerce session, and
- 11 d. any organization-specific trading agreement data items for the ancestor
12 organizations to the buyer representation in the buyer-store electronic
13 commerce session.

1 3. The computer program product of claim 2 in which the application interface for returning
2 a set of governing terms and conditions determines the set of governing terms and conditions for
3 the buyer-store electronic commerce session by applying a set of conflict rules to the set of the
4 terms and conditions in the union set of the said trading agreements.

1 4. The computer program product of claim 1 further comprising computer readable program
2 code means for defining and maintaining a cache memory used for the storage and retrieval of
3 store setting trading agreement data items.

1 5. The computer program product of claim 1 further comprising computer readable program
2 code means for defining and maintaining a cache memory for storage and retrieval of referencing
3 information regarding trading agreements and referenced trading agreement data items.

1 6. An electronic commerce system supporting on-line stores accessible by a set of buyers,
2 each buyer having a buyer representation in the electronic commerce system, each buyer

3 representation being associated with one of a set of one or more organizations, the system
4 comprising:

5 means for defining and maintaining a set of customer trading agreement data items, each
6 comprising terms and conditions associated with one of the set of buyer representations and one
7 or more of the on-line stores;

1 means for defining and maintaining a set of base trading agreement data items
2 comprising terms and conditions, each of the base trading agreement data items being available
3 for reference by one or more of the customer trading agreement data items or one or more of
4 others of the set of base trading agreement data items;

5 means for defining and maintaining a set of store settings trading agreement data items,
6 each store settings trading agreement data item being associated with one of the on-line stores;

7 means for defining and maintaining a set of organization-specific trading agreement data
8 items, each organization-specific trading agreement data item being associated with one of the
9 set of organizations; and

10 an application interface for returning a set of governing terms and conditions for a buyer-
11 store electronic commerce session, based on the referenced customer, base, store settings and
12 organization-specific trading agreement data items.

1 7. The system of claim 6 in which the application interface for returning a set of governing
2 terms and conditions determines the set of governing conditions for the buyer-store electronic
3 commerce session by taking the union set of the terms and conditions specified in the following
4 trading agreements, where such agreements are defined to comprise:

5 the customer trading agreement data item for the buyer-store electronic commerce
6 session;

7 any base trading agreement data items referenced by the customer trading agreement data
8 item and by other referenced base trading agreements;

9 any store settings trading agreement data items for the store of the buyer-store electronic
10 commerce session; and

11 any organization-specific trading agreement data items for the ancestor organizations to
12 the buyer representation in the buyer-store electronic commerce session.

1 8. The system of claim 7 in which the application interface for returning a set of governing
2 terms and conditions determines the set of governing terms and conditions for the buyer-store
3 electronic commerce session by applying a set of conflict rules to the set of the terms and
4 conditions in the union set of the said trading agreements.

1 9. The system of claim 6 in which a cache memory is used to store setting trading
2 agreement data items.

1 10. The system of claim 6 in which a cache memory is used to store referencing information
2 regarding trading agreements and for storing referenced trading agreement data items.

1 11. A computer-implemented method for defining governing terms and conditions for a
2 transaction in an electronic commerce system, the system supporting on-line stores accessible by
3 a set of buyers, each buyer having a buyer representation in the electronic commerce system,
4 each buyer representation being associated with one of a set of one or more organizations, the
5 method comprising the steps of:

6 defining and maintaining a set of customer trading agreement data items, each
7 comprising terms and conditions associated with one of the set of buyer representations and one
8 or more of the on-line stores;

9 defining and maintaining a set of base trading agreement data items comprising terms and
10 conditions, each of the base trading agreement data items being available for reference by one or
11 more of the customer trading agreement data items or one or more of others of the set of base
12 trading agreement data items;

13 defining and maintaining a set of store settings trading agreement data items, each store
14 settings trading agreement data item being associated with one of the on-line stores;

15 defining and maintaining a set of organization-specific trading agreement data items,
16 each organization-specific trading agreement data item being associated with one of the set of
17 organizations; and

18 determining the governing terms and conditions for the buyer-store electronic commerce
19 session for the said transaction, based on any referenced customer, base, store settings and
20 organization-specific trading agreement data items.

1 12. The method of claim 11 in which the step of determining the governing terms and
2 conditions comprises the step of taking the union set of the terms and conditions specified in the
3 trading agreements defined to comprise:

4 the customer trading agreement data item for the buyer-store electronic commerce
5 session;

6 any base trading agreement data items referenced by the customer trading agreement data
7 item and by other referenced base trading agreements;

8 any store settings trading agreement data items for the store of the buyer-store electronic
9 commerce session; and

10 any organization-specific trading agreement data items for the ancestor organizations to
11 the buyer representation in the buyer-store electronic commerce session.

1 13. The method of claim 12 in which the step of returning a set of governing terms and
2 conditions further comprises the step of applying a set of conflict rules to the set of the terms and
3 conditions in the union set of the said trading agreements.

1 14. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of placing a copy of store setting
2 trading agreement data items in a cache memory.

1 15. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of storing referencing information
2 regarding trading agreements and referenced trading agreement data items in a cache memory.